Tier 2 Interventions

Check & Connect

(Christenson, Thurlow, Sinclair, Lehr, Kaibel, Reschly, et al., 2008)

Adapted from material produced by the Institute on Community Integration, College of Education, University of Minnesota.

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Purpose: Enhance student engagement with school and learning, promote student competence and provide persistent support for academic and behavioral standards and expectations.

Essential Features: (a) A mentor who keeps education salient for students; (b) Systematic monitoring (the "check" component); (c) Timely and individualized intervention (the "connect" component); (d) Enhanced home-school communication and home support for learning.

Who can benefit?

Elementary Indicators
<u>Behavioral:</u> Late to school, absenteeism including excessive excused absences, history of educational neglect, behavior referrals to office, suspension or expulsion, frequent school moves
<u>Academic:</u> Not completing assignments, failing classes, reading below grade level, below proficiency on state standardized tests
<u>Cognitive:</u> Minimal interest in school, resistance to learning, low academic self-efficacy and perceived competence
<u>Affective:</u> Social isolation, feelings of not belonging to school

Secondary Indicators
<u>Behavioral:</u> Skipping classes, absenteeism, truancy, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspensions, office referrals, detention, expulsion, history of dropping in and out of school, frequent number of school moves, limited extracurricular participation
<u>Academic:</u> Credit deficiency, failing classes, below proficiency on state standardized tests, poor task completion rates, low success rates, incomplete homework assignments
<u>Cognitive:</u> Minimal interest in school, resistance to learning, low academic self-efficacy and perceived competence
Affective: Low expectation to graduate, social isolation, feelings of no belonging to school

Basic Approach:

1. Meet daily to a minimum of weekly with student to review risk factors and check-in with the student.
2. Record progress on "Check" section of the monitoring sheet
3. Record focus of contact with student in the "Connect Basic" section of the monitoring sheet.
4. Record any actions taken based on contact in the "Connect Intensive" section of the monitoring sheet.
5. Refer to Check & Connect Intervention List for intervention suggestions

Step One: Complete Intake Form for Targeted Students
Collect information about family circumstances, demographic characteristics, and school experiences that may place student at additional risk.

Step Two: Select Mentors
>   Desirable characteristics include (a) willingness to persist with students; (b) personal belief that all students have abilities and strengths; (c) willingness to cooperate and collaborate with school staff; (d) advocacy skills; (e) organizational skills; (f) a willingness to be a mentor (i.e. "want to, not obligated to").

Step Three: Use "Check" Procedures and Monitoring Sheet
>   Mentor meets daily, or at a minimum weekly, to complete the "Check" portion of the Mentoring Sheet to make decisions about whether to deliver basic or intensive interventions. Increased risk leads to introduction of interventions to reconnect students by implementing intensive intervention support. If student is showing increased signs of disengagement, increase the frequency of checking and monitor student performance daily.

Step Four: Implement "Connect" Procedures and the Monitoring Sheet
>   Determine the level of intervention needed. The kind of intervention support is based on levels of risk indicated by regular monitoring. See Table 1 for guidelines on indicators and criteria for high risk.

Table 1: Guidelines for defining indicators and criteria for high risk

Indicator of Risk	Definition	High Risk
Tardiness	Arriving late either for school or for class.	Five or more incidents per month or ≥ 15 percent incidents per month
Skipping	Missing selected class periods within a day without an excused reason.	Three or more incidents per month or ≥ 15 percent incidents per month (e.g., # classes skipped / # classes times days enrolled).
Absenteeism	Full day's absence for excused or unexcused reasons. Days when the student is absent for out-of-school suspensions should be included here.	Three or more incidents per month or ≥ 15 percent days per month (e.g., # days absent / # days enrolled).
Behavior referrals	Being sent to administrative or resource staff for inappropriate behavior	Three or more referrals per month.
Detentions	A consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student "owes" time either before or after school. (The student is often required to perform some custodial function on school grounds, complete school work, or sit quietly.)	Two or more incidents per month.
In-school suspension	A consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student spends the school day(s) in a separate area or classroom of he school building.	Two or more incidents per month.
Out-of-school suspension	A consequence for inappropriate behavior for which the student spends a defined number of school days at home. (The student is not allowed on school property for the suspension period.)	Two or more days suspended per month.

Failing classes	Receiving a grade of D or F in any class.	Two or more D's per grading period and/or one or more F.
Behind in credits	Earning too few credits to be on track to graduate in four years	Earning less than 80% of the possible credits per grading period.

Christenson, Thurlow, Sinclair, et al. (2008)

BASIC INTERVENTION: All students, regardless of risk, receive the basic intervention on a weekly basis. If students are meeting expectations, connecting through basic intervention may be faded to less often (e.g. twice monthly), but always on a regular schedule.

- *Share general information about Check & Connect*. Share general information about monitoring system and provide information to parents or guardian about mentors role.
- *Provide student with regular feedback.* Praise students for improvements or continued success in various aspects of performance (e.g. attendance or grades). Let students know you are concerned about their connection to school (e.g. tardy to class or incomplete homework assignments). Review Monitoring Sheet to provide concrete, visual representation of progress.
- *Regularly discuss importance of learning and staying in school.* Ask student about the importance of school and share "facts" of staying in school: Students have to attend regularly to do well in school. Dropouts earn an average of $60 a week less than high school graduates. During a lifetime, dropouts earn approximately $200,000 less than those who complete high school.
- *Monthly problem solving about indicators of risk.* Problem solve with students about indicators of risk and staying in school. Gide students through real or hypothetical problems using a cognitively oriented five-step problem solving plan:
  1. Stop! Think about the problem.
  2. What are some choices?
  3. Choose one.
  4. Do it.
  5. How did it work?   (August, Anderson & Bloomquist, 1992)

  The use of the five-step problem solving strategy helps to empower students to take control of their behavior and is a basis for teaching productive coping skills such as seeking social support, focusing on solving the problem, working hard, and seeking to belong and participate. Mentors help students integrate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to meet the demands of the school environment.

INTENSIVE INTERVENTION: Intensive interventions are implemented in addition to the basic intervention for students exhibiting high risk. Mentors may begin by implementing intensive intervention if student is at high-risk and work toward the student receiving only basic intervention.

Academic Support

- Connect students with a tutor. Possible resources include tutoring services offered by the school; older or more advanced students; neighborhood or community agencies; college and university interns
- Develop individualized academic contracts. Tips for contracts include keeping it *simple* (focusing on only one or two target tasks), *positive* (stating the tasks in terms of what the student will do), *realistic* (making sure the student is capable of reaching the goal), and *collaborative* (involving the student in determining the task, reward, and the time involved to achieve the goal).
- Assist teachers in making accommodations for students who are struggling.

Problem-Solving

- Facilitate student social skills groups. Possible resource materials include *Skill Streaming the Adolescent, The Prepare Curriculum, Building Social Problem Solving Skills.*
- Facilitate family problem-solving meetings. Suggestions for making family meetings more successful include providing a meal (doesn't have to be fancy but this is an excellent ice breaker and conversation flows more freely over food); providing child care for younger siblings (one inexpensive way is to hire several of your students whose families will be attending); providing transportation (bus tokens, cab fare, or providing rides); holding meetings in a centrally located place other than the school. Funds may be available from a variety of sources to support family problem-solving meetings: school parent-teacher organizations, a business partner, church groups, or community service organizations. Some school districts have resources available for transportation to school functions.
- If family problem-solving meetings aren't feasible, consider home visits to provide families with problem-solving information. Hold immediate problem-solving sessions with students regarding high-risk behaviors. Structure the conversation around the five step plan.
- Develop individualized behavior contracts. Tips for contracts include keeping it *simple* (focusing on only one or two target tasks), *positive* (stating the tasks in terms of what the student will achieve), *realistic* (making sure the student is capable of reaching the goal), and *collaborative* (involving the student in determining the task, reward, and the time involved to achieve the goal).
- Explore alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Possible alternatives include in-school suspension, Saturday school, several detentions, restriction from athletics or other extra-curricular activities, and family mediation services.

Recreational and Community Service Exploration

- Facilitate youth involvement in after-school activities.
- Learn about existing programs that are offered through community organizations, such as your Parks and Recreation Department, YMCA, YWCA, religious organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers ∕ Big Sisters, or community education.

- Help students arrange for summer jobs or other structured summer activities. Possible resources include city- or state-wide youth agencies or employment counselors at schools. Assist students in completing applications. Help students obtain needed documents such as birth certificates and social security cards. Role play interview sessions with the student and review "dress codes."

Connecting with Parents

Mentors function as liaisons between home and school and strive to build constructive family-school relationships and increase home-school communication and to support families to be more engaged at school and with their children's learning

Home-school communication strategies:

- Call parents on a regular basis, not just when there are problems
- Write notes to parents to let them know what is going on in school (make language simple and in family's first language).
- Make home visits regarding educational progress.
- Make home visits at least once a year for a positive reason.
- Find out whether parents need suggestions, resources, or support to help with sudent at home.
- Directly invite parents to be partners.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences with parents.

Step Five: Provide Mentor Support and Supervision:

Check & Connect Coordinator holds regular meetings with mentors to provide necessary orientation for implementing Check & Connect and maintaining intervention integrity.

Step Six: Evaluate Program

Graph and analyze daily/weekly data collected on risk indicators for individual students and for program effectiveness. Data should be graphed for all students for review at the team meeting. The coordinator may choose to print only those students who are "priority" students for the meeting, however, a master file should be kept of all weekly graphs.

For more information on Check & Connect:

Christenson, S.L., Thurlow, M.L., Sinclair, M.F., Lehr, C.A., Kibel, C.M., Reschly, A.L., et al. (2008). Check & Connect: A comprehensive student engagement intervention manual. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Manuals ($45) can be ordered from:
Publications Office
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
109 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455   http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/

Check & Connect Intake Form

Information should be based on student status at time of referral:

Student name	Date of signed permission

Student ID	Monitor/Mentor

Date of birth   Grade at referral

Gender   ☐Male   ☐Female

Ethnicity / race	Special Services	Residence
☐African American	☐Special Education	☐Lives with parent(s)/guardian
☐American Indian/Native ☐ Alaskan	☐Title 1	☐Lives with other family
☐Asian or Pacific Islander	☐ELL	☐Lives with foster parent(s)
☐Caucasian	☐None	☐Out-of-home placement
☐Hispanic	☐Don't know	☐Single parent home
☐Other _____		☐Other _____

Indicate the at-risk behaviors the student has engaged in, as documented by records·

Behavior	Since the beginning of the current school year and prior to intervention				During the prior academic year			
	Mark one box			If yes	Mark one box			If yes
	Yes	No	Don't know	# of times	Yes	No	Don't know	# of times
Late to school (excused/unexcused)								
Absent (excused/unexcused)								
Behavior Referrals								
Detention								
Bus Incidents								
Suspension								
Poor Academic Performance								
Grade Retention								
Out-of-home Placements								
Running Away								
Substance use or abuse								

Does student have a history of withdrawal (e.g. absences) prior to DATE   ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Don't know

Family Risk / Stressor:

☐ English second language   ☐ Homeless / Shelter
☐ Siblings with history of school problems   ☐ Unemployment
☐ Parent(s) did not complete school   ☐ Substance abuse
☐ Physical health challenges

Check & Connect Monitoring Sheet   Month_____ Student _____ Mentor_____

DATE	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	Risk Indicator	
CHECK																											
Tardy																										≥ 5	
Skip																										≥ 3	
Absent																										≥ 4	
Behavior referral																										≥ 3	
Detention																										≥ 2	
In-school suspension																										≥ 2	
Out-of-school suspension																										≥ 2	
Failing classes	_____ D's _____ F's													risk indicator ≥ 1 F and/or ≥ 2 D's per grading period													
Behind in credits	_____ Credits earned out of _____ total													earning <80% of possible credits per grading period													

CONNECT

BASIC

Shared general information																									
Provided regular feedback																									
Discussed staying in school																									
Problem-solved about risk																									

INTENSIVE

Arranged for alternative to suspension																									
Contracted for behavior or grades																									
Communicated with parents																									
Made special accommodations																									
Participated in community service																									
Participated in social skills group																									
Worked with tutor or mentor																									
Other_____																									

< High risk for month